

MENPS News

Te Whare Akoranga o Maungawhau, 7 May, 2020

From The Principal

Kia ora koutou

Under the Level 2 details released today, we are able to give a sense of what to expect when school re-opens. Review of Level 3 will take place on Monday, 11 May, with a 48 hour notice period expected.

Whenever the timeline is confirmed, schools are expected to re-open the Monday following a move to Level 2. This means the earliest (and, at this stage, most likely) date for schools to re-open is Monday, 18th May, although this date is yet to be confirmed.

So, what will school look like at Level 2 at MENPS? The key points below summarise much of what will be in place. The bottom line is that, even though we will be open, we will still be some way from 'business as usual', and working within a framework of a new 'safer normal'. The concept of the 'bubble' ceases to be a consideration at Level 2, with a shift in focus to hygiene, contact tracing capability and common sense. Here at school, this will include;

Key Points

- A zero-tolerance approach to illness. **Stay home even if slightly unwell**
- Isolation of anyone who is unwell from others in the sickbay
- **Reasonable social caution and etiquette** (rather than true social distancing). Social distancing in the school environment is not practical or realistically achievable with classes full of active young children (a class full of children cannot even physically fit with a 1 metre distance around rows of individual desks, let alone the difficulties of trying to maintain distancing at entrances, exits and in corridors etc). We will manage this as sensibly as we can, promote reasonable etiquette and limit widespread sharing of items and resources where possible (with staff in particular being as conscious as they can be of their own distancing)
- During recreation, Year Levels will be designated play areas to assist with gathering limits and contact tracing requirements, but we need to accept that, at break-times, children are going to do what they do best - play together. Given the low-to-zero community transmission basis for a lowering of the alert level, some playground equipment/high-contact areas may be restricted for a time, but children will otherwise be given more freedom at these times within reason
- Continued education and monitoring of appropriate and regular hand hygiene

- Continuing enhanced cleaning protocols for contact surfaces, including high traffic areas such as toilets and shared items such as digital devices
- Protocols to sensibly manage high traffic 'bottleneck' times where possible, such as morning tea and lunch
- High risk students and staff remaining at home - we will advise individual students and classes who may be affected, including what distance learning arrangements will be available (distance learning at Level 2 will not otherwise be an available 'option' for children who do not meet the Ministry of Health definition of vulnerable people)
- Limits on gatherings of up to 100 people. This means no assemblies or large events (such as school productions) at this stage

Some other points to be aware of

- The office will be open, but visitors will be limited to those who are essential only
- Parents are requested to drop and pick up at the gate or away from class entrances and not enter school buildings without permission to assist with contact tracing requirements
- No use of drinking fountains - **please ensure your child has a named drink bottle**
- Health and PE programmes will be modified - most organised sport is unlikely to resume at this stage, although this will be assessed on a case by case basis
- Most trips off-site will be postponed until Level 1, unless they can be undertaken while safely maintaining all Level 2 requirements
- Some extra-curricular programmes may resume, either live or via video conference on a case-by-case basis, when it is practical to do so
- Before and after-school programmes seem likely to resume, with appropriate precautions in place - further information will be forthcoming on this

Aside from the points above, the key message to be aware of is that for the time being our highly social, active and collaborative approach to teaching and learning won't be quite the same just yet. MENPS distance learning programmes will cease completely when school re-opens, but classroom programmes may have a slightly more individualised feel for a while. For example, it may not be prudent at this stage for teachers and groups to work in very close proximity, and some collaborative activities will of course need to be modified as appropriate.

Nonetheless, Level 2 does mean a return to a meaningful, purposeful and engaging classroom programme learning alongside friends and peers, and it will include many of our core principles around curriculum design. Please be aware, however, that we will be still operating within the framework of some significant constraints that will make some aspects of life and learning at school more challenging, at least in the short term, so your patience and understanding in your interactions with staff and teachers in this regard is appreciated.

Frankly, there will be some 'catching up' to do when we resume, and this will take time as we adjust. We will need the support of all our parents and families in this, but I can assure you that we will be doing everything we can to fully reconnect with the children and their learning to help make sure they are back 'on track' as soon as possible. It won't happen overnight, and it is important for us all to park any lurking academic performance anxieties and look to the longer game. We will get there, but we must acknowledge and appreciate that this will be a gradual process. We won't be sending 'extra work' or pressuring the children unnecessarily to 'make up' the time spent in lockdown.

Some practical considerations (such as, for example, Parent Conferences and Reports) may, of course, mean delays to our usual calendar as we get back up and running, and are not the immediate priority. Similarly, some of our new enrolments may have to wait a little longer than originally expected. Again, we appreciate your patience and understanding in the current circumstances.

Most importantly, the wellbeing of our tamariki continues to be front-and-centre as this is always a pre-requisite to happiness and success at school. We do not underestimate the fact that Levels 3 and 4 have been a significant event in all of our lives, and one that we will be supporting the children with, as needed, in age-appropriate ways. For many, they will no doubt pick up where they left off with ease. For others, there may be anxieties and a period of re-adjustment, which is completely understandable. Taking an empathetic approach and dealing sensitively and openly with the children around this will be a high priority for us.

You will receive a more detailed update early next week via email on the next steps and the expected timeframe. What I can tell you at this point is that we are keen and ready to get back to the chalkface and be assured we will make every effort to do so in a safe, well-managed and carefully planned way.

Until then, our Distance Learning programme continues for at least another week. This means we need everyone to hang in there for the final stretch while we gear up for what we hope is a return to school in the very near future!

Ka kite anō au i a koutou

Alan Jackson
Principal



Ministry of Education - Alert Level 2 for Schools

Under Alert Level 2, it is safe for all schools to open. Safe and sensible practices for hygiene and contact tracing will be the norm, and all students will be able to return, so long as they remain well.

Under Alert Level 2, there are still likely to be new cases which may be the result of household transmission or associated with cluster outbreaks that are contained. The disease remains in New Zealand, so we need to remain vigilant and take appropriate steps to avoid transmission. People are able to leave home but are asked to do so in a safe and conscientious way.

The key principles for [Alert Level 2](#) are to:

- reduce the risk of someone getting infected in the first place
- ensure we can identify and contact anyone who becomes infected
- understand that Level 2 is not business as usual

Schools will be open to all students and year levels at Alert Level 2 from the beginning of the next school week after the announcement is made. All staff will be able to be on site from the start of Alert Level 2, as will students who have been on site during Alert Level 3.

Contact Us

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Meet the MENPS team



Keep in touch

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Check back on our website, or join the official Mt Eden Normal Facebook page to keep up to date!

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